

MATCHES OF THE YEAR SO FAR: one man's analysis.

Howdy!

I just got a tape that had four match of the year candidates on it so I figured, Hell!, it's July, the year is more than half over, let's see what we got!

I just watched the Jushin Liger/Shinjiro Ohtani match, the three ECW Juventud Guerrera/Rey Misterio Jr matches and the Too Cold Scorpio/Sabu time limit draw, so I'm definately a happy camper who is full inquisitive insight.

Here is a list of the ones, off the top of my head, that I've really dug so far, in order of how much I liked them, and then I will sort them out.

2nd ECW Juventud/Rey Liger/Ohtani Regal/Finlay (the two before the parking lot brawl)
Juventud/Rey (March in Mexico on the Barnett handheld) Benoit/Ohtani 3rd ECW JG/RM jr
Sabu/Scorpio Liger/Sasuke for the IWGP at BF96. Ohtani/Takaiwa Shiryu/Super Delphin New
Japan jrs vs UWFi jrs ten man tag. TAKA Michinoku vs TigerMask Bret Hart vs Davey Boy Smith
Malenko/Liger on Nitro

The best match I've seen so far would have been the Juventud/Rey match from Tijuana, but the third Caida is so screwed up, that it almost ruins it. The best of the ECW series was the second one, though the version that I saw was pretty truncated. It was cooler because they use three different Japanese finishers at the end of each fall, my fave being Rey's Minami Toyota Straight Jacket Suplex with a bridge which I've never seen a man attempt before. Plus, Juventud's Dragon suplex is as impressive as Chris Benoit, who is obviously one of Juventud's idols. Watching Misterio and Sabu back to back, one can see the influence of Sabu on these guys, something that is very obvious to see in Psicosis, but a little more subtle in Rey and Juventud. Its not so much the highspots per minute but more in the way that they incorporated Sabu's brawling style- which I'm guessing is as much a homage to him as the suplexes are to their other influences.

For those who forgot about them, go back and watch the Regal/Belfast Bruiser matches, because they still hold up for feud of the year. They are freakin brutal and some of the most intense brawls one will see. Watch them one after the other and you get a feeling as to how much effort is put into every match. Finlay best be coming back soon.

Shinjiro Ohtani is in four of these and he has definately hit the point where he can be considered one of the greatest wrestlers in the world, especially from a selling standpoint. The brutality of the Benoit match is pretty incredible, but the brutality of the Liger/Ohtani match surpasses it (especially with that Liger bomb that looks like it breaks Shinjiro in half), but the key to building the crescendo at the end is how masterfully Ohtani sells the mountain of punishment and the credibility of his comeback (something that was a little off in the Ohtani/Black Tiger match I watched tonight, so I didn't include it). The highlight of the Benoit match is where he tops the

hellish powerbomb by Benoit by hitting that beautiful springboard DDT. Any thing less would have been anticlimatic. Add that to the Death Valley Bomb he takes from Takaiwa in their match and we can say that we have a highly offensively-talented young man who can sell at Steamboat proportions.

The Sabu/Scorpio match makes mad that I have to hunt down tapes of this stuff when it is only six hours away. Hey ECW! Get a real TV contract! This is one of the first matches I've seen where most of Sabu's highspots made sense, but I think the way he wrestled it, not as a wild man, but as a fan favorite, made it that much cooler. I'm guessing Scorpio was controlling the pace because I don't remember a Sabu match where he sold his bumps this well.

The TAKA/TigerMask match was great because TAKA did all of his insane highspots, was a complete bastard and you still hate TigerMask for working on the injured knee TAKA was selling. TAKA is pretty close to becoming my favorite wrestler (I'm guessing he will be when I finish watching the next Michinoku Pro tape next week.)

The ten man match is in there because it has a vicious Death Valley Driver by Takaiwa and a Yamamoto suplex to highlight one of the stiffest style matches in mainstream wrestling. Cool moves, stiffness, intensity- what else could you want.

All in all, the US is pretty well represented, but you still have to go out of country or ECW to see consistently great stuff.